

# MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT



## *Office of Public Information*

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### **COURTS, LAW ENFORCEMENT LINKED BY JUDICIAL NETWORK PROJECT; IMPROVED LAW ENFORCEMENT EXPECTED FROM STATEWIDE SYSTEM**

LANSING, MI, January 27, 2005 – Most felony convictions in Michigan are now reported electronically the same day to a state law enforcement database, thanks to a Michigan Supreme Court technology initiative.

Chief Justice Clifford W. Taylor said that the Judicial Network Project “is critical to law enforcement. By updating law enforcement information on a daily and often immediate basis – instead of a week or more later – the courts help ensure that the public is protected and that criminals receive fair and appropriate sentences.”

Michigan trial courts now electronically report 97 percent of adult and 90 percent of juvenile felony dispositions to the State Police Criminal History System. Electronic reporting helps courts to meet federal goals for timely, complete and accurate reporting of criminal history information.

Mark Dobek, Director of Judicial Information Systems, a division of the State Court Administrative Office (SCAO), said that, in the past, only courts in larger jurisdictions could electronically send the data. Other courts submitted disposition data on paper “because we didn’t have a communications infrastructure to link each trial court to the state network,” Dobek said. “The Michigan State Police would have to keypunch the paper dispositions into the state’s criminal history database.”

Dobek explained that “The State Police have historically maintained a central electronic repository for criminal records and case dispositions. They developed an electronic interface for the submission of dispositions from trial courts. However, many state trial courts lacked the ability to submit that information electronically. The state’s 241 trial courts used over 40 different case management systems. As a result, many of the court systems couldn’t ‘talk’ electronically to the State Police system. In addition, most courts’ computers and local area networks were obsolete, and the state did not have a secure network to connect the courts to the State Police’s criminal history system.”

To address those issues, the Michigan Supreme Court initiated the Judicial Network Project in 2001. SCAO’s Judicial Information Systems Division led the project, assisted by the Michigan State Police, the Michigan Department of Information Technology, the Trial Court Services Division of SCAO, and county and municipal governments. Also involved were SBC, EDS, Dell, and over 40 other private contractors.

The project initially concentrated on 25 courts with the highest felony caseloads, along with two Upper Peninsula counties. The five-phase project ultimately equipped all 319 court sites in Michigan's 83 counties with the hardware, software and connectivity needed to electronically transmit disposition data to the criminal history system.

The annual budget for the four-year project averaged \$2.3 million. Funding came from National Criminal History Improvement Program grant and the Judicial Technology Improvement Fund, an annual funding source in the Supreme Court's budget supported by court fees. Also supporting the project was a portion of the penalty money returned to the State of Michigan after the federally-mandated Child Support Enforcement System was successfully implemented under the leadership of then-Chief Justice Maura D. Corrigan.

In 2005, the Judicial Technology Improvement Fund will expand into other applications, such as a data warehouse for state courts to share information about pending and disposed cases throughout the state. Other projects include paying traffic tickets and filing court documents over the Internet, Dobek said.

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